

Joel Roberts Poinsett to Andrew Jackson, January 20, 1833, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

JOEL R. POINSETT TO JACKSON.

Charleston, January 20, 1833.

My dear Sir, I had prepared a letter to be sent to you by express, when yours was brought to me by the District Attorney. The Message is admirable and you will perceive a coincidence between the views taken of the subject by the Committee appointed by me and yourself, as well as the course recommended to be adopted by Congress.

With respect to the applications made to you by Mr. Graham, Harrison and others I will attend to their being supplied with the means of defence whenever necessary. They all want to have arms to put into the hands of the men immediately, to which I object as such a measure will have the effect of provoking a contest and of putting us in the wrong. I think that govt. ought to be prepared to strike the moment the troops of the interior are moved towards the city. You will see by the governor's general orders that preparations are making for that purpose. If they [are] allowed to occupy the city, it will cost much blood to dislodge them. We shall be exposed to their insults, which I much doubt if with all the christian forbearance we can exercise, we can long brook. You may rest assured, that these reckless men will not be put down by any moral influence we may be able to exert over them. They are desperate and believe if they can bring on a contest with the federal government they will excite the sympathy and receive the aid of the neighbouring states. Nothing keeps them in check and foils them so much as the steady opposition of the Union party throughout the state. It must be made to appear, that this is a contest between the friends and supporters of the govr. and the laws and a rebellious faction, which has by the

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most deceptive means obtained possession of the power of the State. The government would not discharge its duty if it did not sustain the former, and we will I trust so act as to merit it's support.

I expect the next move will be secession and we must be prepared to resist it. I cannot but think that we, the Union party, ought at once to declare our firm determination to bring the state back into the Union and call for the aid of the General government to put down the rebellion of a faction and restore order and tranquillity. And that the general government ought to be ready to sustain us. I never will suffer these men to withdraw the state of South Carolina from the Union. I will raise the standard against them instantly, but to do so with effect and with the United action of the Union party they must act with the countenance of the federal government. The threats of the Nullifiers, that the air shall be darkened with our carcasses as Traitors, appal some, who I believe would have stout hearts if they believed themselves safe from such an ignominious death.

I observe what you say about the head of the Monster Nullification. We must avoid making this man of too much importance. You are aware that in our country a man may be persecuted into consequence. I verily believe, that to treat this bad man with merited contempt will kill him morally, physically and politically. Whereas to attack him as the arch Rebel might enlist in his favor a feeling he is totally unworthy of. He deserves punishment and I am disposed to inflict it in its most cruel form. Let him walk through the world with the mark of reprobation upon him as a man who for his own unhallowed ambition would have involved his country in Ruin and disgrace.

Commodore Elliott¹ is here and I have already had a conference with him. We shall act in perfect concert.

¹ Jesse Duncan Elliott. He commanded the West India squadron and the Charleston navy yard 1829–1833.

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If any military movements are to take place here Genl. Scott ought to return. Bankhead is a good officer; but our people and I myself have more confidence in the skill, activity and experience of Genl. Scott. I do not wish to delay the express any longer. I am sure we, the friends of order and the Union, will receive the proclamation with universal approbation, and aid with heart and hand the constituted authorities in carrying out the measures recommended in that able document.

I am Dear Sir, with great respect